

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

August 22, 2019
4:00 PM
BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center
One Columbus Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201

MINUTES

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Present:

William Elovirta, Becket; John Boyle, Dalton; William Cooke, Great Barrington; James Sullivan, Hinsdale; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Rene Wood, Sheffield; Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge; and Douglas McNally, Windsor. Brian O’Grady, Williamstown and Andrea Wadsworth, Lee arrived after the Minutes of May 23, 2019 vote.

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Absent:

Christine Hoyt, Adams; Peggy Rae Henden-Wilson, Alford; Mark Webber, Cheshire; Carl McKinney, Clarksburg; Bruce Bernstein, Egremont; Cindy Bosley, Florida; Peter Gallant, Lanesborough; Edward Lane, Lenox; Steve Weisz, Monterey; Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington; Sherry Youngkin, New Ashford; William Hiller, Otis; Caleb Mitchell, Peru; Alan Hanson, Richmond; and Richard Grillon, Washington.

Also, present: Robert Malnati, Sarah Vallieres, and Bridget Keegan- BRTA; Rauley Caine, BTM/PMB; Anuja Koirala, BRPC; Ann Condon, Great Barrington Public Transportation Advisory Committee; Patti Annechiarico; Tate Coleman, Great Barrington Public Transportation Advisory Committee; Ken Geremia, Simon’s Rock and Stephen Barrett.

	Voting Shares	Present	
Adams	2.16	0.00	
Alford	1.00	0.00	
Becket	1.05	1.05	
Cheshire	2.11	0.00	
Clarksburg	1.00	0.00	33.00
Dalton	2.22	2.22	needed for
Egremont	1.00	0.00	quorum
Florida	1.00	0.00	37.14 present Minutes’ Vote
Great Barrington	4.03	4.03	43.71 present Adm. Report
Hinsdale	1.30	1.30	
Lanesborough	2.60	0.00	
Lee	3.92	3.92	
Lenox	3.39	0.00	
Monterey	1.00	0.00	
Mt. Washington	1.00	0.00	
New Ashford	1.00	0.00	
North Adams	4.92	4.92	
Otis	1.00	0.00	
Peru	1.00	0.00	
Pittsfield	18.77	18.77	
Richmond	1.04	0.00	
Sheffield	1.08	1.08	
Stockbridge	2.77	2.77	
Washington	1.00	0.00	
Williamstown	2.65	2.65	
Windsor	1.00	1.00	
Disability Community	1.00	0.00	

1) **ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM.

2) **MINUTES OF MAY 23, 2019 MEETING-VOTE**

Ms. Wood made a motion to accept the minutes of the May 23, 2019 meeting.

Mr. McNally seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3) **ADMINISTRATOR`S REPORT**

Mr. Malnati stated that the Governor signed the State Budget and that the line item collectively for the RTA's was \$90.5 million. \$87 million was allocated using the current formula and the remaining \$3.5 million for another round of discretionary grants administered by MassDOT. Mr. Malnati stated that last year's discretionary funds were \$4.5 million. The FY20 State Budget did not include a cost of living/inflation index like the MBTA has.

Mr. Malnati shared the BRTA completed their annual borrowing exercise on July 31, 2019. This year the amount that was borrowed was \$5.15 million with a net interest cost of 1.524303%. TD Securities was the successful bidder out of the four companies that responded. This is a short-term note under 365 days and is used for cash flow purposes.

Mr. Malnati said the audit for FY19 had been completed by Adelson & Company the first week of August and the draft report will be issued in September. The financial statements are due to the State by October 1st and are also posted on BRTA's website. The BRTA Audit/Finance committee will review the draft audit prior to the September 19th Board meeting.

Mr. Malnati explained the evening service started July 1st and that there were several positives. The ridership in July for the Routes 1 and 34 was fairly decent for being the first month, but that the Route 21X did not have the same amount of ridership. The Route 11N, which started in January has also continued to grow. There is a new survey on the website asking if customers have used the new evening service, if so what routes, and if not, why? The survey asked customers if they knew about BRTA's new evening service. 67% said they did not know BRTA had evening service. The survey asked about Great Barrington's service and if the pilot service should go through Lee. Mr. Malnati stated 59% said yes and 41% said no. The survey asked if they would prefer a Great Barrington loop, rather than a service from Pittsfield to Great Barrington and 72% said no. Ms. Wood questioned how long these pilot services would be running for. Mr. Malnati stated that BRTA had funded for them until June 30th and that they will be monitoring progress for ridership. The funding for the evening service is a matrix and is data driven. He would like to review it again after another couple of months for more statistics. He has been working with groups to help promote the evening service, and the survey results showed that some customers were not aware of the service. Ms. Wood questioned what BRTA was doing for marketing and advertising. Mr. Malnati stated that going to meetings and having a face to face interactions to get the word out, as well as flyers posted on the buses. BRTA had different email blasts and chains as well. Mr. McNally asked if BRTA used public access TV, as he has seen it be very successful. Mr. Cooke brought up the idea of the route 21 connecting to Simons Rock College could

increase ridership. Mr. Malnati stated that he has had a preliminary discussion about adding Simons Rock as a stop. Currently Simons Rock is a demand stop on the outbound Route 21 trip. Ken Geremia, the campus safety director from Simons Rock spoke about stopping their current town/school shuttle and pushing all ridership to BRTA. Tate Coleman mentioned that he believed the current ridership would increase 50% if Simons Rock was added to the Route 21.

Mr. Malnati stated that BRTA has met with Senator Hinds, 1 Berkshire, BRPC, and others to discuss the next steps for the Berkshire Flyer project. There is a line item for \$30K in the FY20 State Budget for BRTA to hire a project manager during the pilot season. Mr. Malnati believed this position would be an outside contractor who would work as a liaison between BRTA, MassDOT and other agencies. A MOU needs to be created and has to be in place by December. Ms. Wood questioned if BRTA would be contributing funds to the Berkshire Flyer and pay for BRTA's management time and space. Mr. Malnati stated that BRTA would possibly be providing an office space and BRTA would be a fiduciary pass through. Ms. Wood stated she would strongly encourage payment for management that BRTA will be providing. Mr. Sullivan mentioned a possible back bill for budgeting purposes and to keep record of the time spent on this project.

4) CURRENT BUS SERVICE – VOTE

Mr. Malnati passed out packets of data points and ridership statistics for July and the pilot evening service. The reports were broken down by the route. The BCC Route 11 was up 26% from last year and the Route 5 loop was down from last year. Mr. Malnati stated he had been discussing ideas on how to get ridership back up for the Route 5. Mr. Malnati said the Route 21X was down 25% which included the new evening service pilot. Ms. Wood asked what the ridership was per hour, is this the morning? Is there an increased demand during certain hours? Mr. Malnati explained that they have to look at the total number. Mr. Malnati also handed out for FY19 the total number of customers who rode the 11N. He pointed out that all four trips on the 11N were being utilized. The packet also included data from the Routes 1&34 and showed consistent ridership each day. The Route 21X showed sporadic ridership that seemed to be building towards the end of July. Mr. McNally mentioned the possibility of the students who attend Taconic High School who play fall sports could use the 11N on the return trip to the ITC in the evening service.

Mr. Malnati stated that the funding for the pilot service is data driven. Mr. Malnati wanted to take a vote to continue reviewing the pilot schedules, and to make adjustments should the current trend continue. BRTA would continue to reach out to other organizations to promote the pilot evening services. Mr. Malnati requested a board vote to be able to move forward with exploring different options to implement in January, again if the current trending continues. Ms. Wood made a motion to explore options for the current bus service. Mr. Elovirta seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

5) CASH REPORTS MAY AND JUNE 2019 - VOTE

Ms. Lamb made a motion to accept the cash reports for May and June 2019. Ms. Wood seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

6) BUDGET YTD

Mr. Malnati gave an overview of the budget through May. At the next meeting Board will review the budget through June as well as the audited financials. Mr. Malnati pointed to revenue erosion because of the strike.

7) **RIDERSHIP YTD**

Mr. Malnati provided an overview of ridership through the end of June. He stated that due to the strike the numbers were down; total ridership was down 7%, Routes 34 and 1 were highest for riders using a wheelchair, and HST was up 3%.

8) **OLD BUSINESS**

None discussed.

9) **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Malnati handed out to the Board the MassDOT's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). For the RTA's to receive the discretionary funding each RTA had to sign an MOU. There are specific targets and thresholds to meet and is RTA specific. Mr. Malnati stated that one of BRTA's goal was to track of the amount of wheelchair riders and riders with bicycles. The goal is to increase wheelchair ridership and to decrease bicycles. Most people using the bike rack are doing so to extend their range that the bus doesn't traverse or if the bus is out of service. With the evening buses, the bikes may go down. He provided an overview to the Board of the MOU. Mr. Malnati stated that the fare prices were to be reviewed, and that some RTA's were going to be eliminating fares to increase ridership.

Mr. Malnati stated that as part community outreach, Associated Industries of Massachusetts was having a CEO briefing, and asked is BRTA would be the host of the event, as well as give a transportation presentation. Mr. Malnati will also be attending the Food Bank of North Hampton forum and meet with Rose and Cole about how they provide transportation. There is a MassDOT grant for \$4.5 million BRTA will be reviewing and submitting an application.

10) **NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME**

September 19, 2019 at 4:00pm.

11) **ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Wood made a motion to adjourn, was seconded by Mr. Boyle, and approved by all.